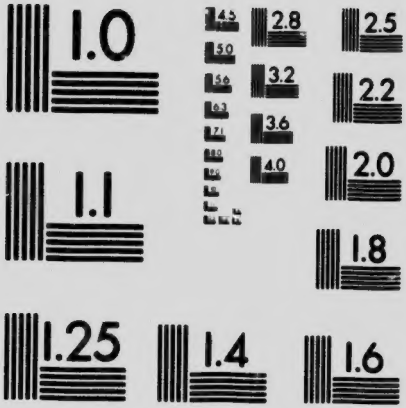

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STATEMENT

OF THE BOARD OF

Wesley College

REGARDING

STAFF REORGANIZATION
IN 1917

STATEMENT

OF THE

BOARD OF WESLEY COLLEGE

REGARDING

STAFF REORGANIZATION IN 1917

To the Friends and Supporters of Wesley College

The Board of Wesley College would like to make to all those who are interested in the welfare of the College a simple statement of the various steps which were taken in the matter of readjusting the staff last Summer, and the reasons which actuated the Board in taking these steps.

In order that you may more fully appreciate the difficulties the Board has had to face it is necessary to state that for the College year ending June 30th, 1915, there existed a deficit of $2,200.00, which was carried as a bank overdraft into the succeeding year.

The revenue for the college year 1915-1916 from fees and room rents suffered a very serious reduction owing to the enlistment of a large number of students for overseas, resulting in an increased deficit for the period ending June 30th, 1916, of $16,500.00.

In May, 1916, when it became apparent that a further large deficit was inevitable, the Executive felt that this information should be given to the annual conference at Portage la Prairie in June of that year.

By request of the Executive the Principal and the Treasurer made a very full presentation of the financial condition of the College to the Conference in June, 1916, and each of these officers strongly advised an increased assessment on the circuits during the period of the war in order to offset in part the constant declining revenue from student fees and room rents. The members of the Conference manifested much interest in the report and appreciated the necessity of additional income ... many were of the opinion that the existing

assessment was all they could hope to raise on their circuits. However, after much discussion Conference passed the following resolution:—

> "IT IS RECOMMENDED that the amount which this Conference should raise for the support of Wesley College be apportioned on the circuits as follows: An assessment of twenty-two per cent. for Winnipeg Methodism, and ten per cent. for the balance of the Conference, and that an educational anniversary known as "Wesley College Day" be held in all congregations throughout the Conference, and that Saskatchewan Conference be requested to contribute Seven Thousand Dollars as its share."

Following the action of the Conference in increasing the assessment seven per cent. on Winnipeg Methodism and four per cent. on the country circuits, the Board was hopeful that the anticipated revenue from the increased assessment and other sources would more nearly provide for the maintenance of the College for the year ending June 30th, 1917. Unfortunately, however, the student registration on reopening the College in the Fall of 1916 showed a further decrease due to increasing enlistment with a corresponding reduction in receipts from fees and room rent and a large increase in the existing deficit of $16,500.00.

The Treasurer becoming alarmed as to the probable further financial outlook of the College convened a meeting of the Finance Committee on the 7th of March, 1917, to consider the situation. Following a general discussion of the facts submitted the Treasurer was requested to prepare a statement showing the probable condition of the finances of the College for the full year ending June 30th, 1917, and to reconvene the meeting when completed.

On March 21st, 1917, the Finance Committee met again when the Treasurer presented the statement previously requested which showed at this date—

(a) An overdraft of $36,000.00 to the Bank.

(b) Receipts of only $4,247.48 on account of the Conference's assessments aggregating $27,049.00.

(c) A reduced revenue of $3,000.00 from student fees and room rents.

(d) An estimated shrinkage of Six or Seven Thousand Dollars in revenue from the circuit assessment.

(e) And consequently an estimated total deficit of $30,000.00 for the College year ending June 30th, 1917.

The serious condition revealed by these figures seemed to demand immediate and drastic action. It was therefore decided to call a meeting of the Executive so that the condition might be more carefully

considered. Before the Finance Committee adjourned the Principal was requested to review the whole situation in order to discover whether it would be feasible to lessen the expenditures without vitally sacrificing the interests of the College and to submit his report to the Executive at its next meeting.

The meeting of the Executive referred to above was held on Friday, March 30th, 1917, when the Treasurer presented a detailed statement relating to the financial position of the College, which was very fully and carefully considered with the hope of devising some practical way of dealing with the situation. In the discussion several proposals were made, namely:—

(a) Close the College.
(b) Discontinue the teaching of Theology.
(c) Abandon the Arts and Preparatory Department.

It was found that it was neither expedient nor feasible to close the College. It was believed that if closed the Board might never be able to reopen the same, and further, the fixed charges in carrying the College property exceeded the income from the Endowment (the only source of income) by about $6,000.00. The closing of the College would also have probably made it impossible to collect moneys to pay off the large deficit.

The General Superintendent and other leaders of the Church strongly urged that the teaching of Theology be not discontinued. The Board being of the opinion that although the number of theological students had been reduced from one hundred and two to about twenty-two the College would likely lose prestige if closed and would have a less sympathetic support by its friends and supporters if Theology were abandoned.

As the Methodist Church by a joint meeting of a special committee of the General Conference appointed to meet and confer with the special committee of the Manitoba Conference and members of the Board of the College held in Young Church, Winnipeg, on 22nd of November, 1914, had unanimously decided to resume Arts teaching in the College it was not expedient for the Board to drop Arts.

The only course, therefore, which seemed feasible was to make such adjustments and reduction of the staff as would bring the expenses of the College within the limit of the probable income without impairing the efficiency of the College. At this meeting the Principal, acting on previous instructions of the Finance Committee, reported that he had canvassed the whole situation and after conferring with some members of the staff regarding the reorganization proposed, recommended that Political Economy in the Arts Course be dropped

and that in the system of co-operation with Manitoba College, Church History, which had been reduced in extent from nine hours per week to five, be left with Manitoba College, and further, that a larger portion of the Hebrew be given to Manitoba College. Consequently the Principal, in accordance with this recommendation, suggested that Dr. MacDonald, Professor of Political Economy, be retired; that Dr. Bland, Professor of Church History, be asked to take a circuit, and that Dr. Stewart, Professor of Hebrew and O. T. Exegesis, be put on a retiring allowance.

Further modifications were suggested effecting a saving in all of about $9,000.00, in which saving the Principal was contributing by agreeing to a reduction in his own salary. All these recommendations were made by the Principal without the slightest suggestion from the Executive or any member of the Board as to the courses affected or members of the Faculty who might be involved and all these recommendations of the Principal were approved of by the Executive. The Principal was then instructed to inform all members of the staff involved concerning the changes decided upon. Immediate action was taken by the Principal, and among others Dr. MacDonald, Dr. Stewart and Dr. Bland were so advised.

A new situation was immediately created because of Dr. Bland's objection to the reorganization decided upon and because of complications which subsequently developed respecting a member of the staff. These complications in no way influenced the Executive in its decision nor did the Executive at any subsequent time retreat from the principles involved in the above decision.

At a meeting of the Executive held on the 27th of May, 1917, the Principal tendered his resignation as Principal of the College and consequently the College was left without an executive head. It was then felt that the only solution which would lead to stability in the College work and put a new principal in right relation with that work would be a complete reorganization of the staff of the College. Therefore a resolution was passed recommending to the Board that all officers, teachers, professors and other employees of the College be notified that their term of service would expire on the 30th day of June, 1917. In doing this the Board was following the lead of the University of Manitoba which was at that time passing through a somewhat similar crisis.

On the 31st day of May, 1917, a meeting of the full Board was held of which due notice was given to each member setting forth that one of the items of business would be to consider the recommendation of the Executive that the term of engagement of all members of the staff and employees of the College be terminated on June 30th, 1917,

and to consider the reorganization of the work and staff of the College and appointments to the staff. At this meeting twenty-six members were present. The recommendation suggested by the Executive that the term of engagement of the members of the staff and employees of the College be terminated on the 30th of June, 1917, was accepted and approved of.

A special committee was appointed to select a Principal, to reorganize the staff and make such appointments as might be required, consisting of Rev. A. E. Smith, Rev. Dr. Darwin, Rev. Dr. Hughson, Mr. E. L. Taylor, Dr. Popham and Dr. Halpenny, with the Chairman of the Board as an ex-officio member. This committee was given full power to act.

On the first of June, 1917, a notice was sent to all members of the staff containing a copy of the resolution and advising each that his or her engagement with Wesley College would terminate on the 30th day of June, 1917, and further, that a special committee of the Board had been appointed to reorganize the staff.

On June 4th the Committee on Staff met and engaged Rev. J. H. Riddell, D.D., as Principal, after which other appointments to the staff were made. In making these appointments the Committee did not reappoint Dr. MacDonald, Dr. Bland and Dr. Irwin for the reasons already indicated in the recommendation of the Principal on March 31st last. It should be noted that the only change in the recommendation was that Dr. Irwin's name was substituted for that of Dr. Stewart's. This was done because the new Principal, having been Professor of New Testament Exegesis for twenty years, would take this department and Dr. Irwin's services could be dispensed with. Accordingly each of the Professors concerned was notified by the Committee on Staff that they were not reappointed to the staff and the reasons therefor were stated to them.

The whole matter was fully discussed at the sessions of the annual Conferences of Saskatchewan and Manitoba. From Saskatchewan the following letter was received:—

"Mr. Edwin Loftus, B.A.,
Winnipeg, Man.

Arcola, Sask., July 3rd, 1917.

"Dear Sir:—

Herewith please find copies of two resolutions passed after long and serious debate by the Saskatchewan Conference upon the recent changes in the Staff of Wesley College.

"1. That in the opinion of Saskatchewan Conference the dismissal of Dr. Bland and Dr. Irwin should be referred to Wesley College Board of Governors, and that it is the Board, and not a committee of the Board, which should deal with the appointment or dismissal of staff.

"2. And, further, in the opinion of the Conference the truest economy would be to strengthen rather than to weaken the Theological Department of Wesley College, and in view of the unquestioned ability of Dr. Bland and the excellency and loyalty of his services for the past fourteen years, we trust every effort will be made by the Board to retain his services.

I am, sincerely,
EDWIN G. SANDERS,
Secy. of Sask. Conf."

And from the Manitoba Conference the following letter was received:—

"Mr. E. Loftus, Winnipeg, June 15, 1917.
Secretary of Wesley College Board,
Winnipeg, Man.

"Dear Sir:—

I beg to remit to you the following item from the report of the Educational Committee and endorsed by the Manitoba Conference recently concluded:

"That whereas the financial condition of the affairs of Wesley College call for a policy of retrenchment, therefore resolved, that this Conference pledge its hearty support to the Board of Directors in taking such steps as they shall consider necessary to guarantee the future success of the College.

Yours very truly,
T. WILBUR PRICE,
Sec. of Conference."

For various reasons which are known to the President of the Manitoba Conference and which have been stated by him on many public occasions, a meeting of the Board could not be secured forthwith to deal with these letters. After consultation with Rev. A. E. Smith, the President of the Manitoba Conference, and with Rev. Dr. Darwin, Ex-President of the Saskatchewan Conference, the Board was called to meet on September the 20th, a date suggested by the above-named gentlemen. At this meeting, at which twenty-six members of the Board were present, all the correspondence relating to the matter and the letters from the Secretaries of the Saskatchewan and Manitoba Conferences were carefully considered. Drs. Bland and Irwin were allowed to present their own cases, and after many members of the Board had expressed their opinions the following resolution was passed unanimously:—

> "That this Board, having heard the statements of Drs. Bland and Irwin, and thoroughly reviewed the facts of the case DO HEREBY ENDORSE the action of the Staff Committee."

A further resolution was passed unanimously:—

> "That the Board, feeling that perhaps unintentionally it had in releasing Drs. Bland and Irwin from the staff at such a time that their Conferences had not provided appointments for them,

might have caused them financial loss, is prepared if it is acceptable to them to repair as far as possible the financial loss so caused."

Doctors Bland and Irwin not being satisfied with the decision of the Board appealed to the Court of Appeal of the Methodist Church. Consequently action was delayed in regard to the second resolution above, pending the decision of the Court of Appeal.

The College Board, instead of incurring the expense of sending a representative to Toronto to attend the meeting of the Church Court of Appeal, submitted to the Rev. Dr. Chown a full record of the history of the case by means of copies of all minutes of meetings and of all resolutions affecting the matter.

The College Board never had any thought of repudiating the authority of the Court of Appeal, and when one of the appellants suggested this in his address to the Court of Appeal the Chairman of the Court of Appeal immediately challenged this statement and said that the speaker had no ground for making such a charge.

A meeting of the Court of Appeal was held in Toronto on the 28th of December, 1917, at which meeting Drs. Bland and Irwin personally appeared. The finding of the Court of Appeal was communicated to the Secretary of the College Board December 29th, 1917, which reads as follows:—

THE METHODIST CHURCH
COURT OF APPEAL
JUDGMENT

Bland v. Wesley College Board
Irwin v. Wesley College Board

"This Court is of opinion that when appointing or removing professors the Board of Directors of Wesley College acts as a General Conference Board.

"We are further of opinion that while the Board acted within its powers under the charter of the College, yet the summary dismissal of Professors Bland and Irwin at the time at which it was done was not in harmony with the usage and law of our Church in that it made it impossible for the annual Conferences to which they belong to provide for these ministers in accordance with the requirements of Discipline, Paragraph 133; and on this account both appellants should be considered under the financial care of the Board (as proposed by the Board itself in its resolution of September 20th, 1917) until suitable provision can be made for each by their respective Conferences of 1918, or earlier by their Conference authorities."

Following the receipt of the finding of the Court of Appeal a meeting of the Executive was held on the 23rd of January, 1918, at which meeting the decision of the Court of Appeal was considered.

At this meeting a Committee was appointed to confer with the two Professors in relation to financial adjustments.

The Committee held three conferences with Drs. Bland and Irwin and reported to the Executive that Drs. Bland and Irwin expressed their willingness to accept $1,500.00 each as a satisfactory settlement of their claim, whereupon the Treasurer issued cheques for the respective amounts to each by direction of the Executive.

By the reorganization of the Staff and adjustment of salaries the saving for the year ending June 30th, 1918, in this item alone will approximate $12,000.00, and consequently will enable the Board to meet its expenses for the current year provided the income is the same as last year.

The readjustment which has taken place has not seriously impaired the work of the College. Of course, it is not to be expected that the departure of such distinguished professors could take place without some comment.

In conclusion the Board trusts that it has made it clear to all who are interested in the College that its action was taken with only one object in view, namely, to conserve the interests of the old College during these days of stress and strain, and would like to assure all its co-workers in the cause of Higher Education in the two Conferences of its hearty desire to co-operate in every way possible in helping Wesley College hold that position of power and influence it has so long exercised and with such distinction.

All of which is respectfully submitted by the Board of Wesley College.

J. H. ASHDOWN,
Chairman.

Winnipeg, May 27, 1918.